

HOW
THE
CARPATHIAN
MOUNTAINS
WERE BORN

A UKRAINIAN LEGEND



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A UKRAINIAN LEGEND

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*Kiev
Dnipro Publishers
1984*

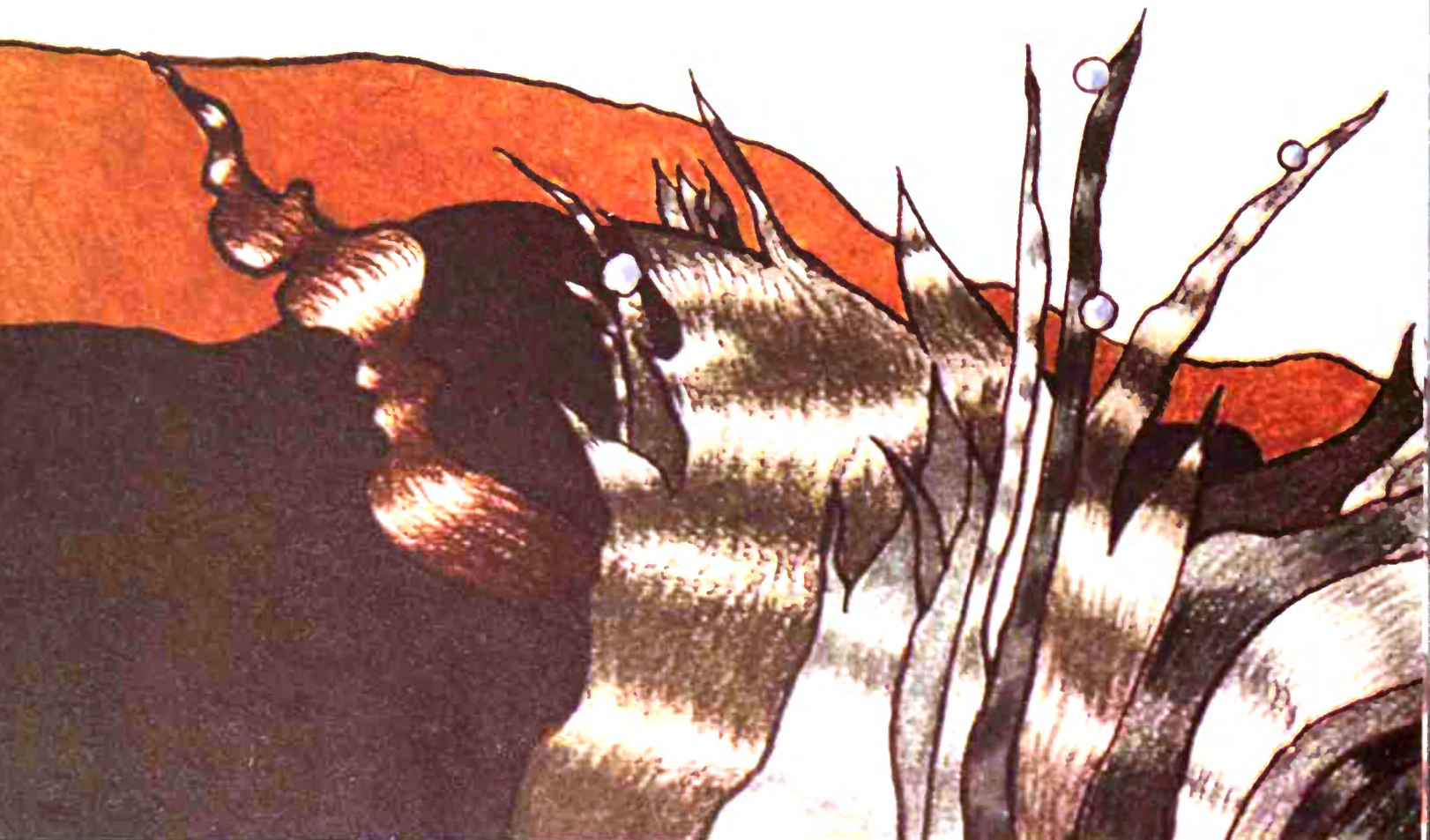




A very long time ago Ukrainian land was an enormous plain, the end of which, no matter in what direction one looked, one couldn't see. Silken green grasses waved over it, the evergreen of firs and pines, mighty oaks and maples, elms
4 and poplars, swayed in the breezes blowing over it, while through its gentle valleys flowed fish-laden streams and rivers.

The ruler of the land was a powerful giant who answered to the name of Al'Mighty.

When Al'Mighty walked the earth trembled under his footsteps. It was said that he was a very knowledgeable husbandman, owning countless numbers of domestic animals.

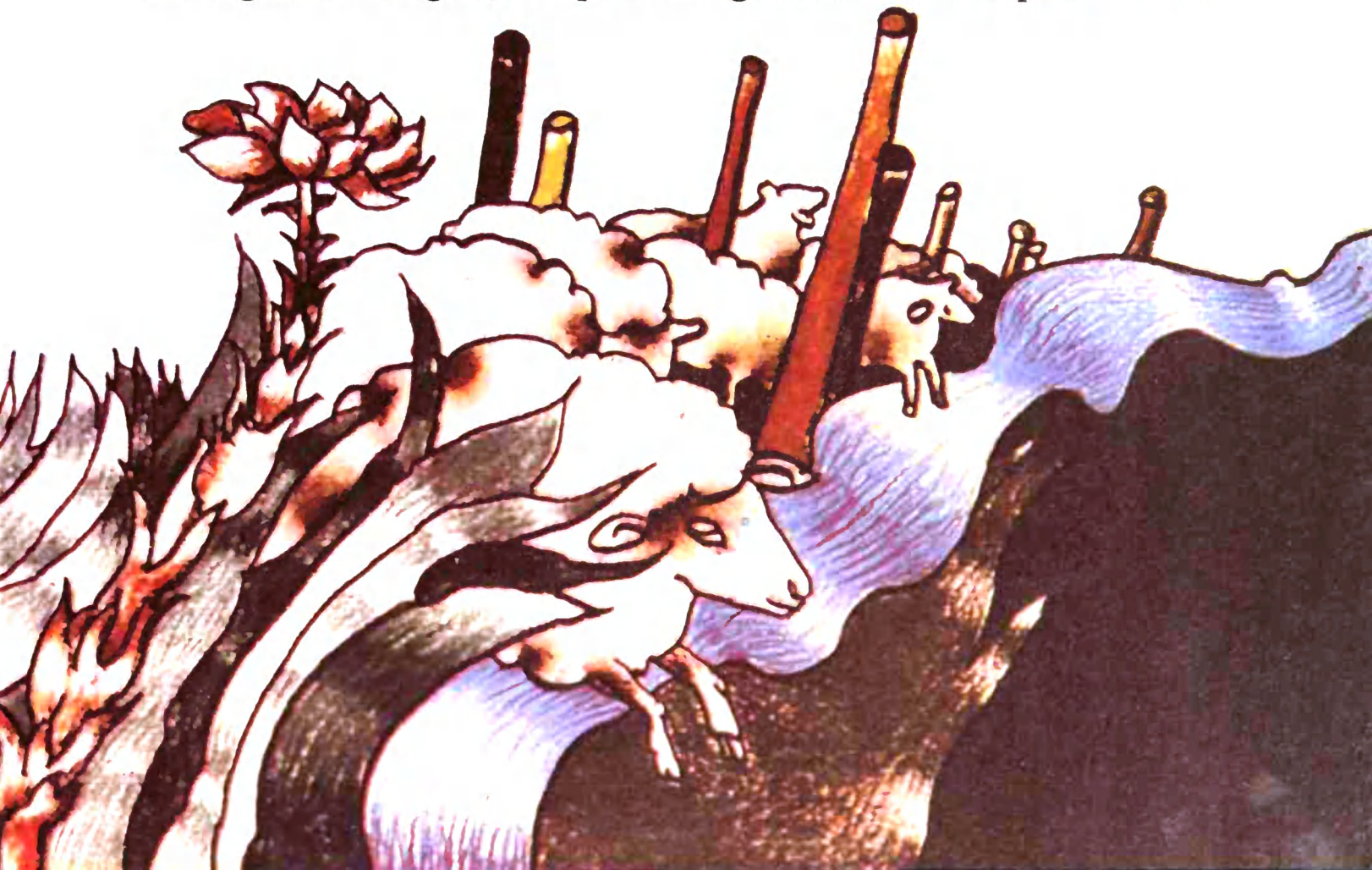


Herds of cattle and oxen, flocks of sheep and droves of horses and pigs pastured on his meadows and wandered through his forests. And fowl! Thousands of ducks and geese floated over pond and stream, and as many chickens cackled in the barnyards.

5

The giant lived in a beautiful palace of white marble, with tall turrets reaching into the clouds. The palace stood on a hilltop thrown up by human hands. It had so many rooms and corridors that one could quite easily get lost in it. And in those rooms — what wealth and beauty! Everything the heart could desire!

At night Al'Mighty slept in a golden cradle spread with





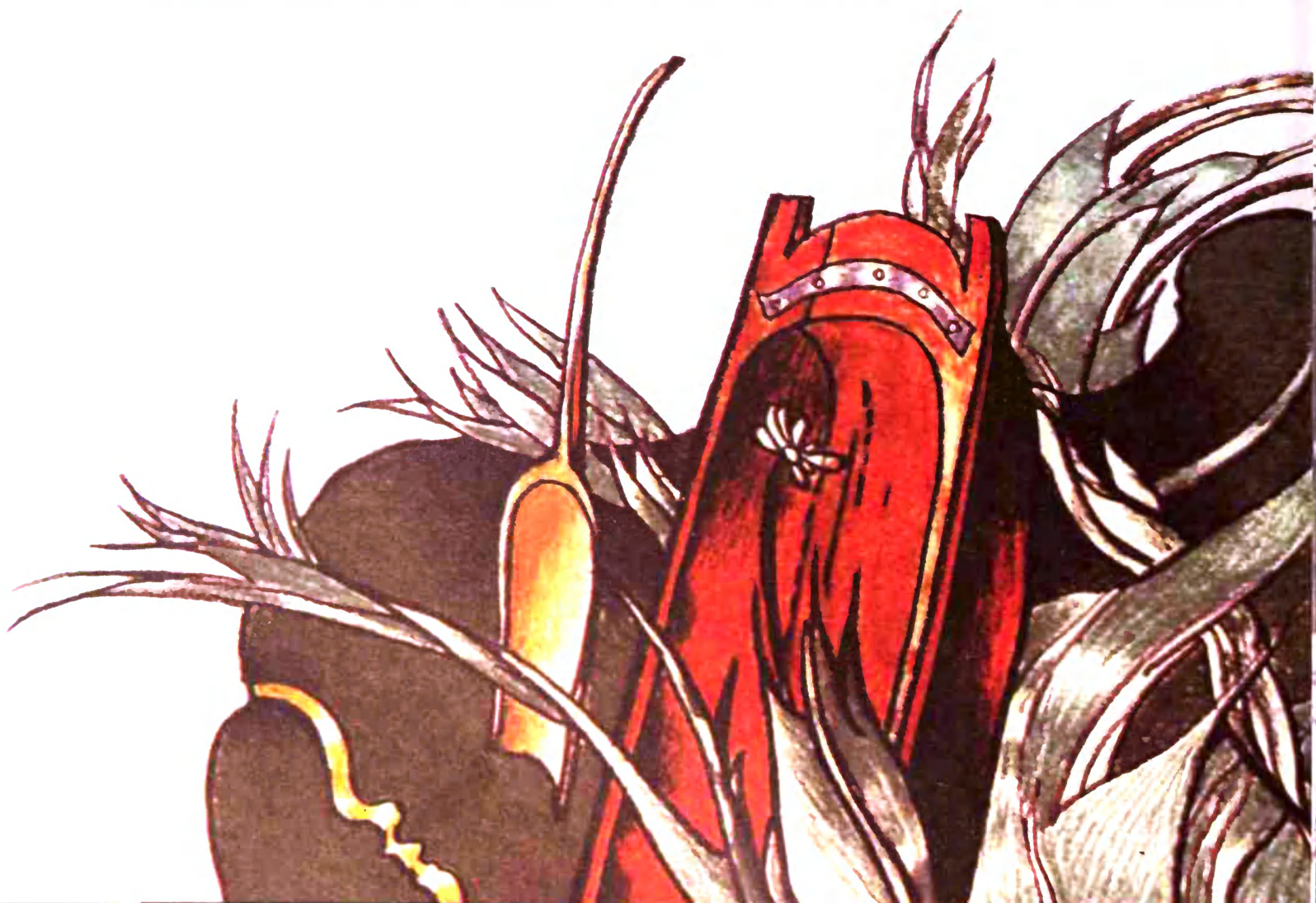


valuable handwoven blankets. During the day he was accustomed to sitting in a silver throne-like chair.

8 Servants worked his broad fields, grew and harvested his bread, looked after his castle, fed his birds. They worked hard, from sunrise to sunset, creating wealth, not for themselves, but for their master Al'Mighty.

The servants, men and women, did not live in the palace, but far from its doors, in earthen huts and hovels. Their master did not wish to be near the smell of human sweat and misery.

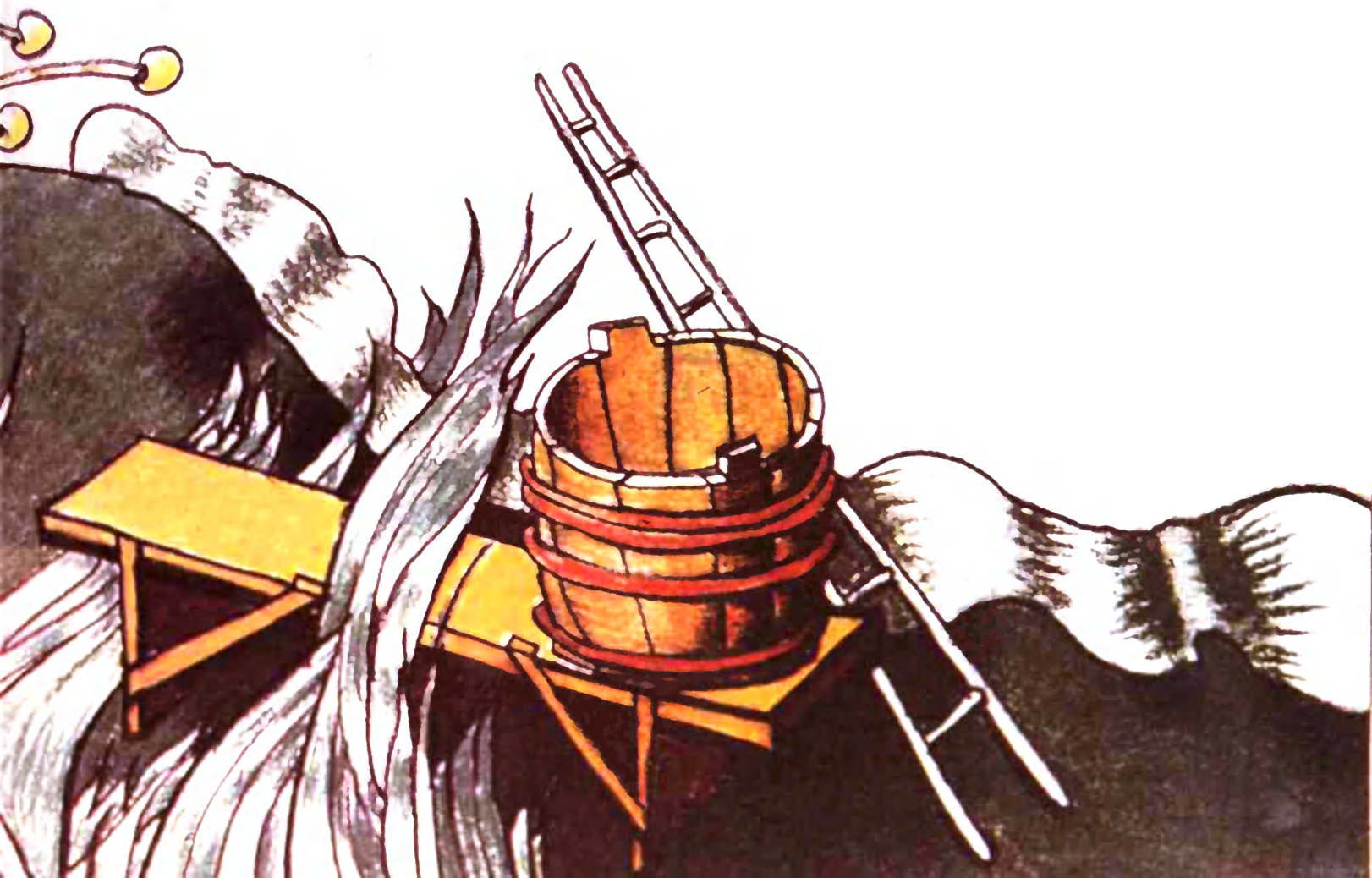
None of the servants, men or women, youths or maidens,



could leave the property of Al'Mighty to look for other work or better fortune. They had to live and die in serfdom.

Among this vast group of people was one young man by the name of Carpo Dniprovsky, who had arrived from the shores of the Dnieper River. He left home to wander when still a young lad of ten: seeking fortune, for his father had died, his mother desperately poor, and he had to help in some way. 9

Carpo worked for Al'Mighty a year, two years, five. Like the other servants, he mowed the hay, tilled and planted the soil with wheat, rye, barley and oats, gathered the harvest. He worked not



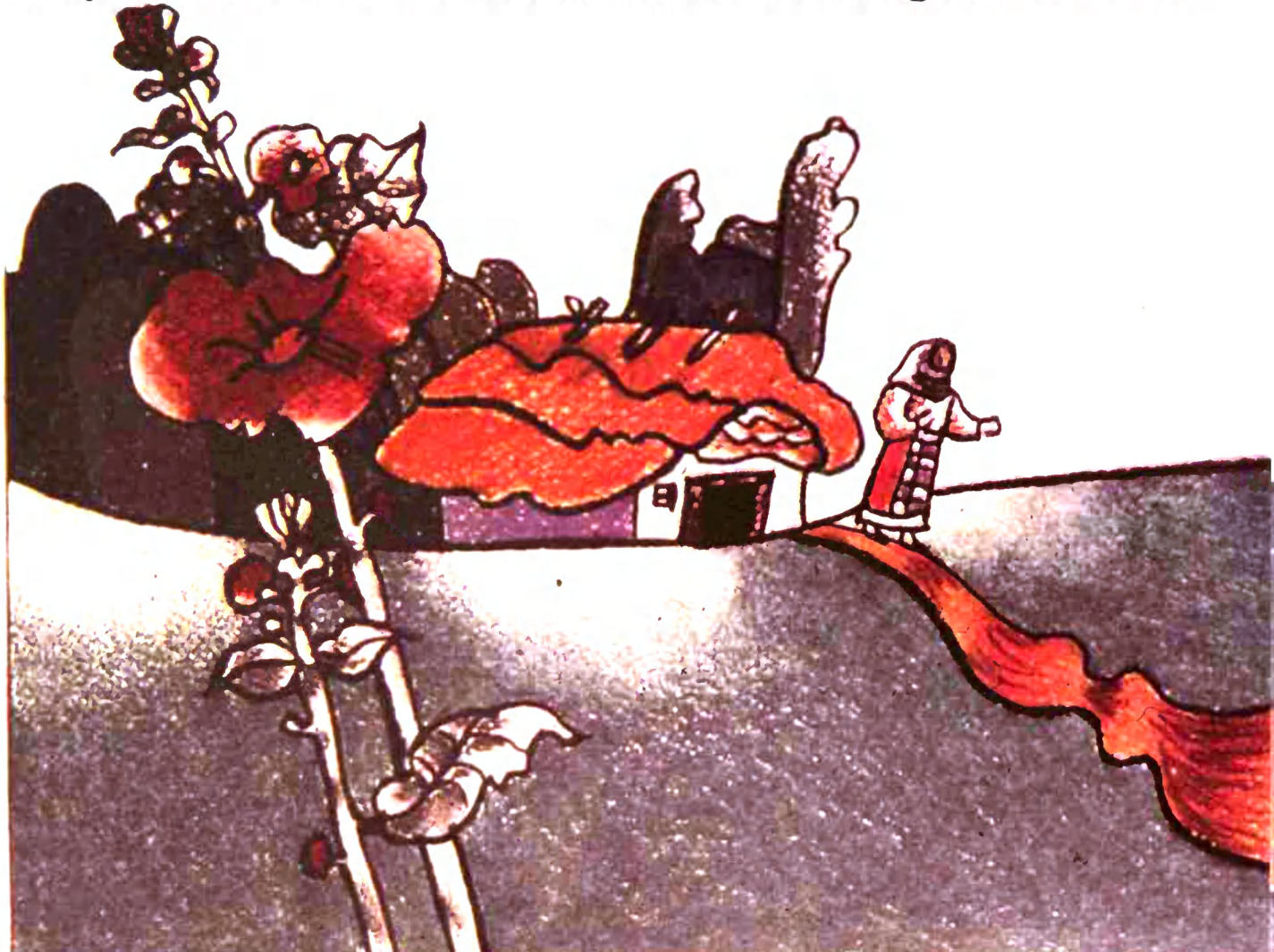




only for himself, but helped others, for he was tender-hearted and sorry for those weaker than himself.

12 He was loved by all he worked with for his honesty, industry and fairness. Carpo abhorred those who bowed low and grovelled before the master. It was difficult for him to watch how Al'Mighty reaped the benefits of their labor while they went hungry.

When Carpo's twentieth birthday came he decided to return home. He was sure that Al'Mighty would reward him for his good work, and that he would go back to his mother with enough money to make both their lives easier. He thought about this



constantly, wondering how to approach the master to settle accounts.

One evening he went out of doors for a bit of fresh air. As he walked by the servant's cottages he suddenly saw a mysterious shadow. Carpo quickly recognized the master, Al'Mighty. He was inspecting the cattle and making sure that all was in order on the estate. Now was the time, Carpo thought quickly, to approach him.

13

When Al'Mighty came near Carpo, the young man made his presence known with a cough.

"Why are you here, Carpo?" asked Al'Mighty, recognizing the boy, "waiting for a young maid, I suppose?"







16 “Not a maid,” answered Carpo, “but for you, good Sir. I would like to talk with you. I have served you long and faithfully, and would now like to return to my home and see my mother while she is still alive... I would beg of you payment for my labors.”

Al’Mighty thought at first that the servant was joking, because none had yet dared to ask for leave of him before. None had ever asked for wages either. But Carpo was determined, and had no thought of giving up.

“I served faithfully, Sir,” he repeated, “and my work, I believe, was worth something.”



“You’ll go nowhere!” shouted Al’Mighty, furious at such daring, “I am the one who gives orders as to whether my servants stay or leave!”

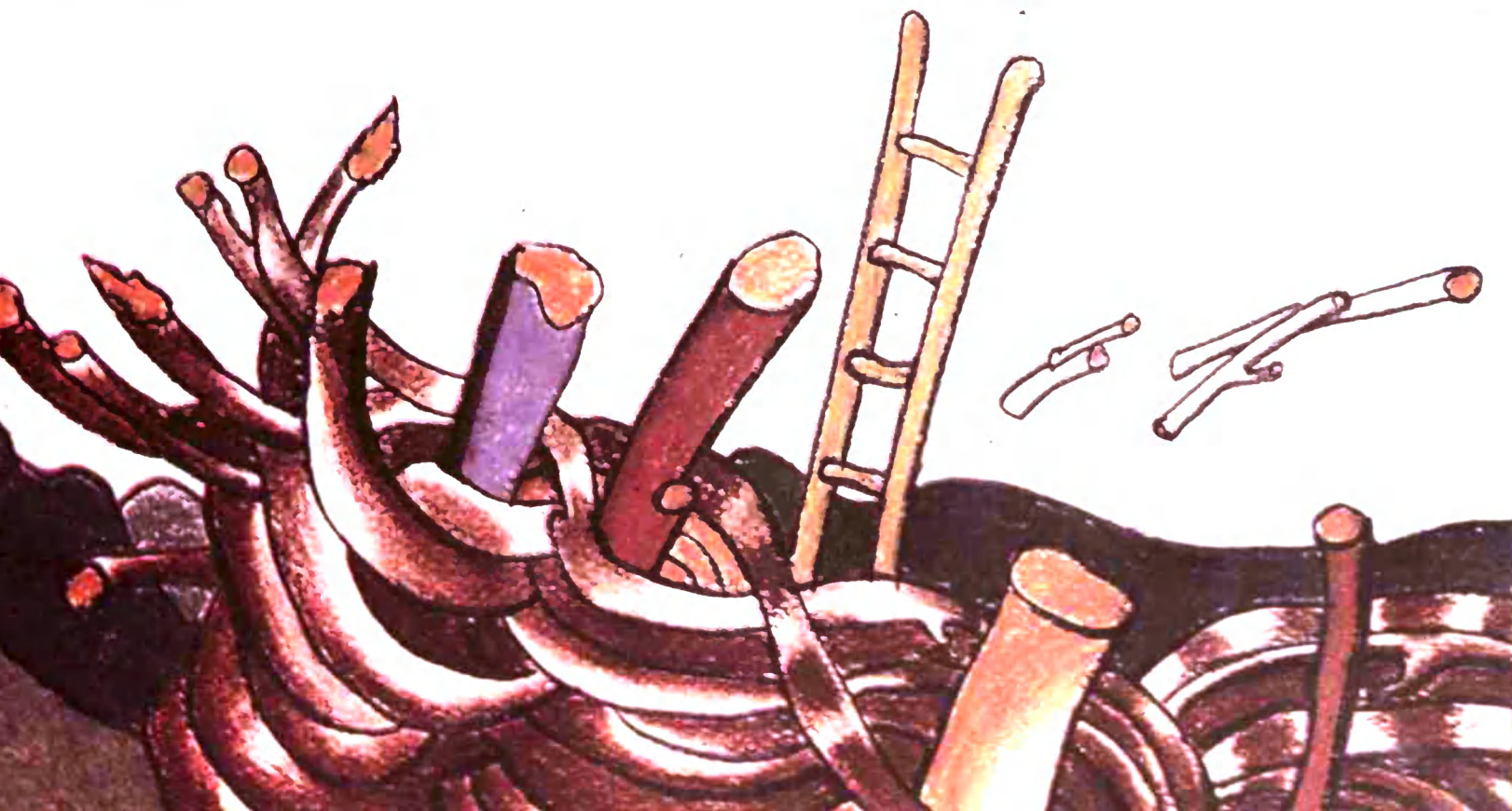
“I am leaving, Sir,” said Carpo stubbornly, “and I insist that my work was worth something.”

This was already an unheard-of insolence which Al’Mighty could not forgive.

“I’ll let you go, but it will be below ground!” he seethed in anger, pointing down and stepping up to the lad. “There you’ll find the wages due you.”

But Carpo did not flinch back a single step.

“You will have to pay for the work I did,” he reminded again, as if he hadn’t heard Al’Mighty’s threats. This answer angered Al’Mighty still further and he flew into such a passion that his eyes turned red and a flame leaped from

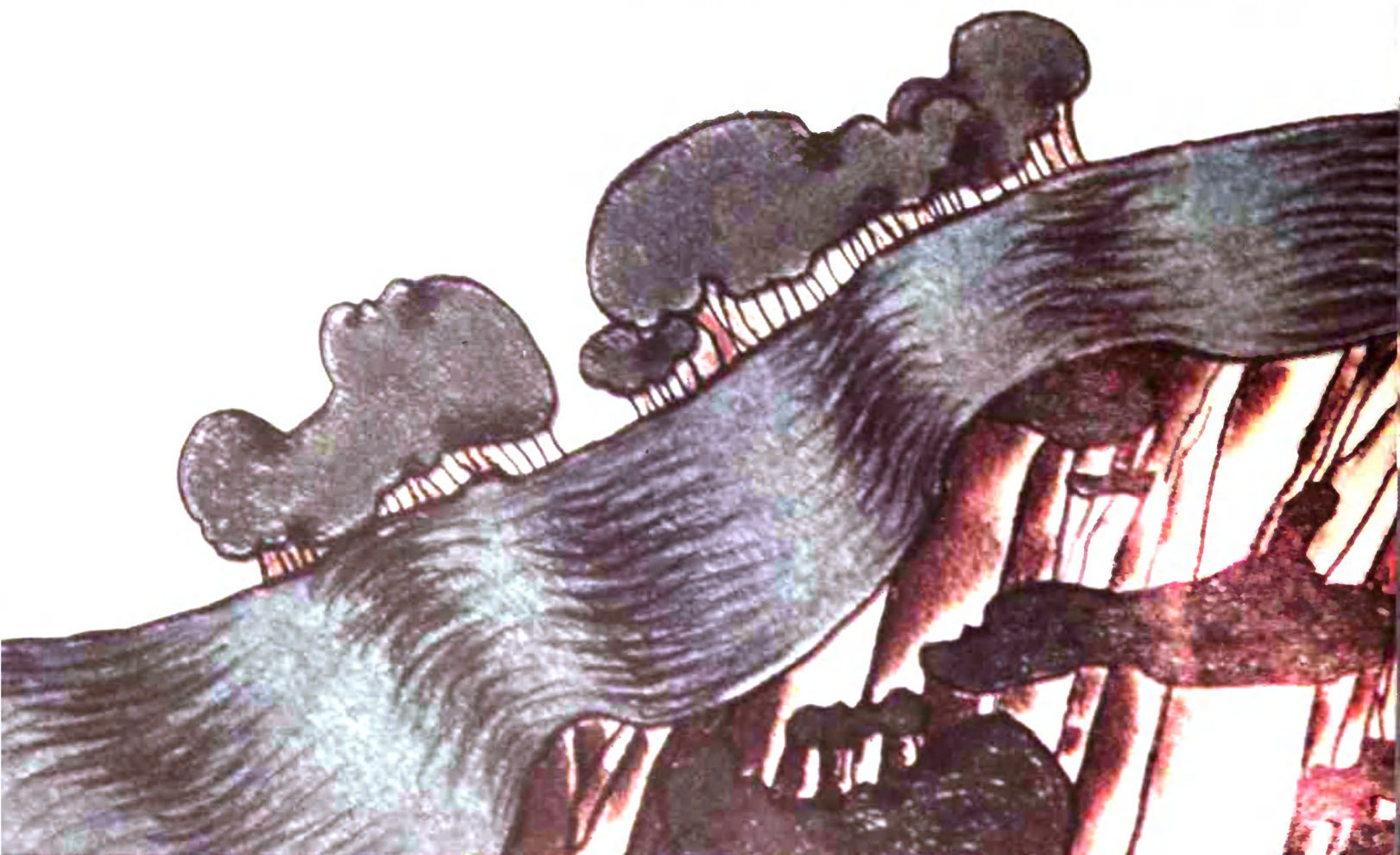






his mouth. He seized Carpo with his powerful hands, lifted him high, and threw him down violently — so violently that his body made a hollow in the earth.

20 But nothing happened to Carpo. He picked himself up on his feet, feeling within himself an invincible strength — given him, perhaps, by the land that he had served so faithfully. He seized Al'Mighty and threw him down, again and again. The earth could not withstand these mighty blows and split asunder. Al'Mighty found himself in an underground cavern where he had hoped to drive his rebellious servant. In vain he tried to break through to the surface — the earth closed over him, leaving not a single crevice. Here is where Al'Mighty turned to his great strength



to help him. He planted his one foot hard against the earth's core and it curved beneath the blow; he stamped his other foot and it curved still further, but didn't open up. He tried to push up with his head and heaved with his back — in vain; he used his fists — nothing helped. But his great struggles to free himself caused the earth to swell and heave, and on the once flat plain, mountain after mountain sprang up, and the more Al'Mighty threw himself about, the higher grew the mountains above him. And there where he struggled the hardest, where now are the Hutsul lands, there the mountains grew highest. 21

In the morning when the servants woke up and saw what had happened while they slept they were filled with wonder.







24 All around them stretched the hills, and where the palace once stood there was nothing — all had vanished into the depths of the earth. Suddenly water seeped through from the underground, filling up the new valley. The people looked on, bewildered, then decided to meet and take council: what to do next, how to continue living. They decided to remain in that land. They called the lake Synevirske or the Blue Eddy, for it was a deep, deep blue, like the sky. And the mountains they named the Carpathians in honor of the lad Carpo.



An entirely new life began for the people. Some remained on the plains, others moved into the mountains. They ploughed, seeded, husbanded their grain and looked after the cattle. They learned to cut down the forest to build themselves homes.

They say that Al'Mighty is still restless underground, still trying to emerge into the sunlight. But his efforts are in vain, for he has grown old and his strength is gone. Never again will he be able to come up above ground to rule as he once did.

25









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